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THE ATTITUDE OF THE FREE NEGRO TOWARD AFRICAN COLONIZATION

In the midst of the perplexities arising from various plans for the solution of the race problem one hundred years ago, the colonization movement became all things to all men. Some contended that it was a philanthropic enterprise; others considered it a scheme for getting rid of the free people of color because of the seeming menace they were to slavery. It was doubtless a combination of several ideas.¹ Furthermore, the meaning of colonization varied on the one hand according to the use the slave-holding class hoped to make of it, and on the other hand according to the intensity of the attacks directed against it by the Abolitionists and the free colored people because of the acquiescent attitude of colonizationists toward the persecution of the free blacks both in the North and South.²

Almost as soon as the Negroes had a chance to express themselves they offered urgent protest against the policy of removing them to a foreign land. Before the American Colonization Society had scarcely organized, the free people of Richmond, Virginia, thought it advisable to assemble under the sanction of authority in 1817, to make public expression of their sentiments respecting this movement. William Bowler and Lenty Craw were the leading spirits of the meeting. They agreed with the Society that it was not only proper, but would ultimately tend to benefit and aid a great portion of their suffering fellow creatures to be colonized; but they preferred being settled "in the remotest corner of the land of their nativity." As the presi-

¹ *The African Repository*, XXVI, 246, and XXIX, 14.

² Jay, "An Inquiry into the Character and Tendencies of the American Colonization and American Anti-Slavery Societies," p. 26 *et passim*; Stebbins, "Facts and Opinions Touching the Real Origin, Character, and Influence of the American Colonization Society," p. 63 *et seq.*; *The African Repository*, and Colonization Society Letters in the Library of Congress.

dent and board of managers of the Society had been pleased to leave it to the entire discretion of Congress to provide a suitable place for carrying out this plan, they passed a resolution to submit to the wisdom of that body whether it would not be an act of charity to grant them a small portion of their territory, either on the Missouri River or any place that might seem to them most conducive to the public good and their future welfare, subject, however, to such rules and regulations as the government of the United States might think proper.³ Many Negroes, however, emigrated from this State during later years. Subsequent accounts indicate, too, that this increasing interest in colonization among the colored people of that Commonwealth extended even into North Carolina.⁴

Farther north we observe more frequent and frank expressions of the attitude of the colored people toward this enterprise. When the people of Richmond, Virginia, registered their mild protest against it, about 3,000 free blacks of Philadelphia took higher ground.⁵ Because their ancestors not of their own accord were the first successful cultivators of the wilds of America, they felt themselves entitled to participate in the blessings of its "luxuriant soil," which their blood and sweat had moistened. They viewed with deep abhorrence the unmerited stigma attempted to be cast upon the reputation of the free people of color, "that they are a dangerous and useless part of the community," when in the state of disfranchisement in which they lived, in the hour of danger, they "ceased to remember their wrongs and rallied around the standard of their country." They were determined never to separate themselves from the slave population of this country as they were brethren

³ Garrison, "Thoughts on Colonization," 8.

⁴ Colonization Society Letters, 1826, Letter of J. Gales, of Raleigh, North Carolina. *Niles Register*, XXXV, 386; XLI, 103.

⁵ The leaders of this meeting were: James Forten, chairman, Russell Parrott, secretary, Rev. Absalom Jones, Rev. Richard Allen, Robert Douglass, Francis Perkins, Rev. John Gloucester, Robert Gordon, James Johnson, Quamony Clarkson, John Sommerset, and Randall Shepherd. See Garrison's "Thoughts on African Colonization." *Niles Register*, XVII, 30.

by the "ties of consanguinity, of suffering, and of wrong." ⁶ They, therefore, appointed a committee of eleven persons to open correspondence with Joseph Hopkinson, member of Congress from that city, to inform him of the sentiments of the meeting, and issued an address to the "Humane and Benevolent Inhabitants of Philadelphia," ⁷ dis-

⁶ Stebbins, "Origin, Character and Influence of the American Colonization Society," 194.

⁷ The address was as follows:

"Relieved from the miseries of slavery, many of us by your aid, possessing benefits which industry and integrity in this prosperous country assures to all its inhabitants, enjoying the rich blessings of religion, by opportunities of worshipping the only true God, under the light of Christianity, each of us according to his understanding; and having afforded us and our children the means of education and improvement; we have no wish to separate from our present homes, for any purpose whatever. Contented with our present situation and condition, we are desirous of increasing the prosperity, by honest efforts, and by the use of the opportunities, for their improvement, which the constitution and laws allow.

"We, therefore, a portion of those who are the objects of this plan, and among those whose benefits, with them of others of color, it is intended to promote; with humble and grateful acknowledgments to those who have devised it, renounce and disclaim every connection with it; and respectfully and firmly declare our determination not to participate in any part of it.

"Nor do we view the colonization of those who may become emancipated by its operation among our southern brethren, as capable to produce their happiness. Unprepared by education and a knowledge of the principles of our blessed religion, for their new situation, those who will thus become colonized will thus be surrounded by every suffering which can affect the members of the human family.

"Without arts, without habits of industry, and unaccustomed to provide by their own exertions and foresight for their wants, the colony will soon become the abode of every vice, and the home of every misery. Soon will the light of Christianity, which now dawns among that portion of our species, be cut out by the clouds of ignorance, and their day of life be closed, without the illumination of the gospel.

"To those of our brethren who shall be left behind, there will be assured perpetual slavery and augmented sufferings. Diminished in numbers, the slave population of the southern states, which by their magnitude alarms its proprietors, will be easily secured. Those who among their bondsmen, who feel that they should be free, by right which all mankind have from God and from nature, will be sent to the colony; and the timid and submissive will be retained, and subjected to increasing rigor. Year after year will witness those means to assure safety and submission among their slaves, and the southern masters will colonize only those who it may be dangerous to keep among them. The bondage of a large portion of our members will thus be rendered perpetual.

claiming all connection with the society, questioning the professed philanthropy of its promoters, and pointing out how disastrous it would be to the free colored people, should it be carried out.⁸

Although a few persecuted Negroes of Maryland from the very beginning believed it advisable to emigrate, the first action of importance observed among the colored people of Baltimore, favoring colonization in Africa, was that of a series of meetings held there in 1826. The sentiment of these delegates as expressed by their resolutions was that the time had come for the colored people to express their interest in the efforts which the wise and philanthropic were making in their behalf. Differing from the people of Richmond they felt that, although residing in this country, they were strangers, not citizens, and that because of the difference of color and servitude of most of their race, they could not hope to enjoy the immunities of freemen. Believing that there would be left a channel through which might pass such as thereafter received their freedom, they urged emigration to Africa as the scheme which they believed would offer the quickest and best relief.⁹

We have not been able to find many records which give proof that in the States far South there was much opposition of the Negroes to the plan of removing the free people

"Disclaiming, as we emphatically do, a wish or desire to interpose our opinions and feelings between the plan of colonization and the judgment of those whose wisdom as far as exceeds ours as their situations are exalted above ours, we humbly, respectfully, and fervently intreat and beseech your disapprobation of the plan of colonization now offered by the American Society for colonizing the free people of color of the United States. Here in the city of Philadelphia, where the voice of the suffering sons of Africa was first heard; where was first commenced the work of abolition, on which heaven has smiled, for it could have had success only from the Great Maker; will not a purpose be assisted which will state the cause of the entire abolition of slavery in the United States, and which may defeat it altogether; which proffers to those who do not ask for them what it calls benefits, but which they consider injurious and which must insure to the multitudes whose prayers can only reach you through us, misery, sufferings, and perpetual slavery.

"JAMES FORTEN, *Chairman*,
"RUSSELL PARROTT, *Secretary*."

⁸ Garrison, "Thoughts on Colonization," p. 10.

⁹ *The African Repository*, II, 295 *et seq.*

of color from the United States. We must not conclude, however, that this absence of protest from the free colored people in that section of the country was due to the fact that they almost unanimously approved the plan of African Colonization.¹⁰ Consideration must be given to the fact that the free colored people in the Southern States did not exercise the privilege of free speech. Consequently, if there were even a large minority who opposed the plan, they were afraid to make their views known, especially when this movement was being promoted by some of the leading white people of that section.

Occasionally there arose among the colored people of the South advocates of colonization, setting forth the advantages of emigration in all but convincing style.¹¹ Such was a free man of color of Savannah in the year 1832. He had always viewed the principles on which the American Colonization Society was grounded as one of large policy, though he saw it was "aided by a great deal of benevolence." And when viewing his situation with those of his colored brethren of the United States he had often wondered what prevented them from rising with one accord to accept the offer made them, although they might sacrifice the comforts of their present situation. He had often almost come to the conclusion that he would make the sacrifice, and had only been prevented by unfavorable accounts of the climate. Hearing that Liberia needed help, he desired to go. He and the Negroes for whom he spoke seemed to be of an enterprising kind. He understood the branches of "wheel-wright, blacksmith, and carpentry," and had made some progress in machinery. He did not expect to go at the expense of the Society and therefore hoped to take with him something more than those who had emigrated on those terms.¹²

Another such freeman spoke from Charleston the same year. He had observed with much regret that Northern

¹⁰ It must be borne in mind, too, that *The African Repository*, in which appeared most of the letters of Negroes favoring emigration to Africa, was the organ of the American Colonization Society.

¹¹ *The African Repository*, VII, 216.

¹² *Ibid.*, XII, 149-150.

States were passing laws to get rid of the free people of color driven from the South on account of hostile legislation.¹³ He was also fearful as to the prospects of the free blacks even in favorable Southern cities like Charleston, where they were given a decided preference in most of the higher pursuits of labor. He believed, therefore, that emigration to Africa was the solution of their problem. He urged this for the reason that the country offered them and their posterity forever protection in life, liberty, "and property by honor of office with the gift of the people, privileges of sharing in the government, and finally the opportunity to become a perfectly free and independent people, and a distinguished nation."¹⁴ The letters of Thomas S. Grimké written to the Colonization Society during these years show that other freedmen of Charleston driven to the same conclusions were planning to emigrate.¹⁵

Conditions in that State, however, forced some free Negroes to emigrate to foreign soil. A number of free colored people left Charleston, and settled in certain free States. After residing two or three years in the North they found out that their condition instead of improving had grown worse, as they were more despised, crowded out of every respectable employment, and even very much less respected. They, therefore, returned to their former home. On reaching Charleston, however, they were still dissatisfied with their condition. Changes, which had taken place during their absence from the State, made it evident that in this country they could never possess those rights and privileges which all men desire. Some of them resolved, therefore, to try their fortunes in Liberia.¹⁶

The Negroes in Alabama had also become interested in the movement during these years.¹⁷ In writing to Mr. McLain, of Washington, S. Wesley Jones, a colored man of

¹³ During these years conditions were becoming intolerable for the free blacks in the South.

¹⁴ *The African Repository*, VII, 239.

¹⁵ Colonization Society Letters, 1832.

¹⁶ *The African Repository*, XXIII, 190.

¹⁷ Colonization Society Letters, 1848-1851.

Tuscaloosa, said that save the Christian religion there was no subject of so much importance and that lay so near his heart as that of African Colonization. All that was necessary to change the attitude on the part of the colored people was a "move by some one in whom the people have confidence to put the whole column in motion," and just "when there is a start made in Alabama the whole body of the free people of color will join in a solid phalanx." As for himself he had fully made up his mind to go to Liberia, but could not leave the United States until he had closed up a ten years' business, and if successful in collecting "tolerably well" what was due him he would be able to go without expense to the Society.¹⁸

In July, 1848, this same writer addressed to Mr. McLain another letter in which he gave details of a trip he had made in an adjoining county in the interest of emigration to Liberia. During this trip he said he had found a few free colored people who, after he had talked with them on the subject, were of one accord that the best thing they could do for themselves was to emigrate to Liberia.¹⁹ In another letter addressed to McLain by the same writer December 29, 1851, it was stated that the colonization movement was still growing in the State. He also said that "those of us who want to go to Liberia are men who have been striving to do something" for themselves and consequently have "more or less business to close up." Mention was also made of the fact that there were at Huntsville, in the northern part of the State, several who had in part "made up their minds to go and only wanted a little encouragement to set them fully in favor of Liberia."²⁰

Although thus favorably received in the South, however, the Colonization Society met opposition in other parts. The spreading of the immediate abolition doctrine by men like Garrison and Jay had a direct bearing on the enterprise. The two movements became militantly arrayed against each

¹⁸ *The African Repository*, XXVI, 276.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, XXVI, 194.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, XXVIII (July 12, 1848).

other and tended to inflame the minds of the colored people throughout the country. The consensus of opinion among them was that the Colonization Society was their worst enemy and its efforts would tend only to exterminate the free people of color and perpetuate the institution of slavery.²¹ So general was this feeling that T. H. Gallaudet, a promoter of the colonization movement, writing to one of its officers in 1831, said that something must be done to calm the feelings of the colored people in the large cities of the North.²² Their resentment seemed to be due not so much to the fact that they were urged to emigrate, but that a large number of the promoters of the enterprise seemed to feel that the free Negroes should be forced to leave.²³ Considering themselves as much entitled to the protection of the laws of this country as any other element of its population, they took the position that any free man of color who would accept the offers of the colonization movement should be branded as an enemy of his race. They not only demonstrated their unalterable opposition but expressed a firm resolve to resist the colonizationists even down to death.

The proceedings of these meetings will throw much light on the excitement then prevailing among the free people of color in the border and Northern States. In 1831 a Baltimore meeting, led by William Douglass and William Watkins, expressed the belief that the American Colonization Society was founded "more upon selfish policy than in the true principles of benevolence; and, therefore, as far as it regards the life-giving spring of its operations," that it was not entitled to their confidence, and should be viewed by them with that caution and distrust which their happiness demanded. They considered the land in which they had been born and bred their only "true and appropriate home," and declared that when they desired to remove they would apprise the public of the same, in due season.²⁴ That same

²¹ Colonization Society Letters, 1831, *passim*.

²² Letter of T. H. Gallaudet in the Colonization Society Letters, 1831.

²³ Jay, "An Inquiry into the Character and Tendencies of the American Colonization Society," 28 *et passim*.

²⁴ Garrison, "Thoughts on African Colonization," 22.

year a large meeting of colored people of Washington, in the District of Columbia, convened for the purpose of expressing their opinion on this important question. Although they knew that among the advocates of the colonizing system, they had many true and sincere friends, they declared that the efforts of these philanthropists, though prompted no doubt by the purest motives, should be viewed with distress. They further asserted that, as the soil which gave them birth was their only true and veritable home, it would be impolitic, if they should leave their home without the benefit of education.²⁵ A meeting of the very same order of the free people of color of Wilmington, Delaware, that year, led by Peter Spencer and Thomas Dorsey, took the position that the colonization movement was inimical to the best interests of the colored people, and at variance with the principles of civil and religious liberty, and wholly incompatible with the spirit of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence of the United States.²⁶

A meeting of free colored people held in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1831, was of the opinion that none should leave the United States, but if there were or should be any expatriated in consequence of abuses from their white countrymen, it was advisable to recommend them to Haiti or Upper Canada where they would find equal laws. In regard to their being sent to Africa, because they were natives of that land, they asked: "How can a man be born in two countries at the same time?" In refutation of the argument made by the Colonization Society, that the establishment of the colony in Liberia would prevent the further operation of the slave trade, they said: "We might as well argue that a watchman in the city of Boston would prevent thievery in New York; or that the custom house officers there would prevent goods being smuggled into any other port of the United States."²⁷ Because there were in the United States much better lands on which a colony might be established,

²⁵ Garrison, "Thoughts on Colonization," 22.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

and at a much cheaper expense to those who promoted it, than could possibly be had by sending them into "a howling wilderness across the seas," they questioned the philanthropy of the promoters of African colonization and adopted resolutions in opposition to the movement.²⁸

A public meeting of colored citizens of New York, with Samuel Ennals and Philip Bell as promoters, referred to the Colonizationists as men of "mistaken views" with respect to the welfare and wishes of the colored people. The meeting solemnly protested against the bold effort to colonize the oppressed free people of color on the ground that it was "unjust, illiberal and unfounded; tending to excite prejudice of the community."²⁹ At a meeting of the free colored people of Brooklyn, promoted by Henry C. Thompson and George Hogarth, it was resolved that they knew of no other country in which they could justly claim or demand their rights as citizens, whether civil or political, but in the United States

²⁸ The resolutions were as follows:

"*Resolved*, That this meeting contemplate, with lively interest, the reported progress of the sentiments of liberty among our degraded brethren, and that we legally oppose every operation that may have a tendency to perpetuate our present political condition.

"*Resolved*, That this meeting look upon the American Colonization Society as a clamorous, abusive and peace-disturbing combination.

"*Resolved*, That this meeting look upon those clergymen, who have filled the ears of their respective congregations with the absurd idea of the necessity of removing the free colored people from the United States, as highly deserving the just reprehension directed to the false prophets and priests, by Jeremiah, the true prophet, as recorded in the twenty-third chapter of his prophesy.

"*Resolved*, That this meeting appeal to the generous and enlightened public for an impartial hearing relative to the subject of our present political condition.

"*Resolved*, That the gratitude of this meeting, which is so sensibly felt, be fully expressed to those whose independence of mind and correct views of the rights of man have led them so fearlessly to speak in favor of our cause; that we rejoice to behold in them such a strong desire to extend towards us the inestimable blessings in the gift of a wise Providence which is deemed by all nature, and for which their valiant fathers struggled in the Revolution.

"ROBERT ROBERTS, *Chairman*,

"JAMES G. BARBARDOES, *Secretary*."

—Garrison, "Thoughts on African Colonization," 20.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

of America, their native soil; and that they would be active in their endeavors to convince the members of the Colonization Society, and the public generally, that being men, brethren, and fellow citizens, they were like other citizens entitled to an equal share of protection from the Federal Government.³⁰

The sentiment of a meeting at Hartford, Connecticut, in 1831, was that the American Colonization Society was actuated by the same motives which influenced the mind of Pharaoh, when he ordered the male children of the Israelites to be destroyed. They believed that the Society was the greatest of all foes to the free colored people and slave population; and that the man of color who would emigrate to Liberia was an enemy to the cause and a traitor to his brethren. As they had committed no crime worthy of banishment, they would resist all attempts of the Colonization Society to banish them from their native land.³¹ A New Haven meeting of the Peace and Benevolent Society of Afric-Americans, led by Henry Berrian and Henry N. Merriam, expressed interest in seeing Africa become civilized and religiously instructed, but not by the absurd and invidious plan of the colonization society to send a "nation of ignorant men to teach a nation of ignorant men." They would, therefore, resist all attempts for their removal to the torrid shores of Africa, and would sooner suffer every drop of their blood to be taken from their veins than submit to such unrighteous treatment. From the colored people of Lyme, Connecticut, came the sincere opinion that the Colonization Society was one of the wildest projects ever patronized by enlightened men. The colored citizens of Middletown, chief among whom were Joseph Gilbert and Amos G. Beman, inquired "Why should we leave this land, so dearly bought by the blood, groans and tears of our fathers? Truly this is our home," said they, "here let us live and here let us die."³²

³⁰ Garrison, "Thoughts on Colonization," 23-24.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 28-29.

³² *Ibid.*, 30-31.

The meeting in Columbia, Pennsylvania, the leaders of which were Stephen Smith and James Richard, expressed the opinion that African colonization was a scheme of the Southern planters and wicked device of slaveholders who were desirous of riveting more firmly, and perpetuating more certainly, the fetters of slavery by ridding themselves of a population whose presence, influence and example had a tendency (as they supposed) to produce discontent among the slaves, and to furnish them with inducements to rebellion.³³ A few weeks later a meeting was held at Pittsburgh under the leadership of J. B. Vashon and R. Bryan. The colored people of this city styled themselves as brethren and countrymen as much entitled to the free exercise of the elective franchise as any other inhabitants and demanded an equal share of protection from the Federal Government. They informed the Colonization Society that should their reason forsake them, then might they desire to remove. They would apprise them of that change in due season. As citizens of the United States, they mutually pledged to each other their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor, not to support a colony in Africa nor Upper Canada, nor yet emigrate to Haiti. Here they were born—here they would live by the help of the Almighty God—and here they would die.³⁴ Early in 1832, the colored people of Lewiston, Pennsylvania, in a meeting called by Samuel and Martin Johnston, expressed practically the same sentiments.³⁵ Through

³³ Garrison, "Thoughts on African Colonization," 31-32.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 34-35.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 49. Among the resolutions passed were:

"*Resolved*, That we hold these truths to be self-evident (and it is the boasted declaration of our independence), that all men (black and white, poor and rich) are born free and equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

"*Resolved*, That we feel it to be our duty to be true to the constitution of our country, and are satisfied with the form of government under which we now live; and, moreover, that we are bound in duty and reason to protect it against foreign invasion; that we always have done so and will do so still.

"*Resolved*, That we view the efforts of the Colonization Society as officious and uncalled for. We have never done anything worthy of banishment from our friends and home."—Garrison, "Thoughts on African Colonization," 41.

the influence of Jacob D. Richardson and Jacob G. Williams, an indignation meeting of the same kind was held at Harrisburg.³⁶

The free people of color, assembled at Nantucket, Rhode Island, in 1831, under the leadership of Arthur Cooper and Edward J. Pompey, saw no philanthropy in the colonization movement, but discovered in it a scheme gotten up to delude them from their native land into a country of sickness and death.³⁷ A Trenton meeting promoted by Lewis Cork and Abner H. Francis viewed the American Colonization Society as the most inveterate foe both to the free and slave man of color. These memorialists disclaimed all union with the Society and, once for all, declared that they would never remove under its patronage either to Africa or elsewhere.³⁸

In New York there had been various expressions pro and con as to emigration to Liberia, but it does not seem that a large number of colored people of that city ever favored it. They believed rather in emigration to Canada. The attitude of the people of that State was shown in 1834 by the troubles of Reverend Peter Williams, Rector of St. Phillip's Church in the city of New York. Working through the Phoenix Society and the Anti-Slavery Society he had endeavored to convince the free colored people that the idea held out to men of color that no matter how they might strive to become intelligent, virtuous and useful, they could never enjoy the privilege of citizens in the United States, was erroneous. On the contrary, he believed that the Declaration of Independence, which his father had helped to maintain, and the Gospel of Jesus Christ had sufficient power to raise the people of color at some time to the rank of citizenship. Although his opposition never extended further than the expression of his views, there arose so much antagonism to him that he was asked by his bishop to resign from the Anti-Slavery Society, because of a disturbance in

³⁶ Garrison, "Thoughts on African Colonization," 40-41.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 33-34.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 45-47.

his church.³⁹ There remained others, however, to continue the attack. At a meeting in 1839 the free people of color of New York entered a unanimous protest against the efforts of this body, reiterating the sentiment that the American Colonization Society was the source from which came the various proscriptions and oppressions under which they groaned.⁴⁰

The attitude of the free blacks of New York was probably better demonstrated on the occasion of the appearance of W. S. Ball, who had been sent to Liberia by the free colored people of Illinois to secure definite information concerning the advisability of emigrating to Africa. On his return to New York, he made a speech to a large assembly of colored people, some of whom desiring to see Liberia for themselves, had made preparations for a company to sail September, 1848. Ball expressed himself as well pleased with the country and after interesting the colored people of Illinois ^{40a} he hoped to return to Liberia with a large emigration. The colored people of New York received him in good faith. While the Liberian Commissioners were in session, President Roberts and his comrades were invited to come to the Anthony Street Church to inform them of the country. After several speeches had been made, opportunity was given to the colored people to ask questions that had not been touched upon. This continued for some time and seemed to elicit information highly favorable to the cause, until a Mr. Morrill made his way up the aisle toward the platform. After having gained the attention of the audience with an air of superiority which showed he was accustomed to control audiences of colored people, he said that he had just come into town and was surprised to find his friends

³⁹ Believing it his duty to aid any free person or persons of color who thought it best and wished to emigrate, instead of opposing them he had given his personal support in their efforts to leave the country. Records would show that he had helped the most prominent men of the Colony to get there, among them being John B. Russwurm and James M. Thompson, two excellent men and good scholars.—*African Repository*, X, 187.

⁴⁰ Cornish and Wright, "The Colonization Scheme Considered," 7.

^{40a} *African Repository*, XXIV, 158.

engaged in holding a colonization meeting. "That question," said he, "has been settled long ago! and the Liberia humbug—" At this point the hisses were so loud he could not be heard. Finally after much yelling and shouting of "hear him," the meeting became a bedlam and the presiding officer attempted to leave the chair. Finding order impossible the meeting was adjourned in an uproar. Amid cries of "a fight, a fight," women leaped over the pews and made their way to the doors. After some time had elapsed order was restored by clearing the house, but Morrill, who seemingly had come with the expressed purpose of breaking up the meeting, was not found in the chaos that ensued.⁴¹

Doubtless the best expression of antagonism to the American Colonization Society came from the Annual Convention of the Free Colored People held first in 1830 and almost annually thereafter in Philadelphia and other Northern cities almost until the Civil War. The Second Annual Convention showed an attitude of militant opposition by emphatically protesting against any appropriation by Congress in behalf of the movement. The Third Annual Convention, which met in Philadelphia in 1833, probably represented the high water mark of their antagonism to this enterprise. There were 59 representatives of the free people of color from eight different States, namely, Pennsylvania, Maryland, New Jersey, Delaware, Rhode Island, New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. The leaders of the movement were James Forten, Robert Douglas, Joseph Cassey, Robert Purvis, and James McCrummell. At an early stage in the proceedings of this Convention there prevailed a motion that "a committee consisting of one delegate from each of the States represented in the Convention, be appointed to draft resolutions expressive of the sentiments of the people of color in regard to the subject of colonization." Although these men were opposed to emigration to Africa, they favored a sort of colonization in some part of America, for the relief of such persons as might leave the United

⁴¹ *The African Repository*, XXIV, 261.

States on account of oppressive laws like those of Ohio.⁴² The colored people would in this case give such refugees all aid in their power.

After having divested themselves of "all unreasonable prejudice," and reviewed the whole ground of their opposition to the American Colonization Society, with all the candor of which they were capable, they still declared to the world that they were unable to arrive at any other conclusion than that the life-giving principles of the Society were totally repugnant to the spirit of true benevolence; that the doctrines which the Society inculcated were hostile to those of their holy religion and in direct violation of the golden rule, and that "the inevitable tendency of this doctrine was to strengthen the cruel prejudice of their opponents, to still the heart of sympathy to the appeals of suffering Negroes, and retard their advancement in morals, literature and science, in short, to extinguish the last glimmer of hope, and throw an impenetrable gloom over their fears and most reasonable prospects." All plans for actual colonization, therefore, were rejected.⁴³

The movement thereafter continued to receive the attention of the people in the various parts of the country, being generally denounced. The Negroes of Ohio were prominent among those who opposed it.⁴⁴ Invited to hear a lecture by Mr. Pinney, a former governor of Liberia, then on a tour in the United States raising funds to purchase land there, the free blacks of Cincinnati held a meeting to protest. Arrogating to themselves the privilege of expressing the opinion of all the colored people of the United States, they respectfully declined the invitation for the reasons that the scheme was iniquitous in that it implied the assumption of the inequality of the free people of color.⁴⁵ They ac-

⁴² Reference is here made to the "Black Laws" of Ohio, passed to prevent the immigration of persecuted blacks from the South into that commonwealth.

⁴³ Proceedings of the Third Annual Convention of the Free People of Color.

⁴⁴ At this time the free blacks throughout the country were being urged by Abolitionists to redouble their attacks on the American Colonization Society. The Negroes merely needed to follow their lead.

⁴⁵ *The African Repository*, XX, 316, 317.

cordingly urged that such sums as their so-called friends might give for the purchase of land in Africa might be used for establishing schools and asylums for colored children in this country.⁴⁶ At a series of meetings of free colored people, held in the city of Cleveland, Ohio, during the winter of 1845-46, the Colonization Society was denounced as an organization whose proceedings tended to aggravate the injustice with which the free colored people were treated in this country. It was called the greatest antagonist which colored people had to meet and put down, before they could "stand erect in this country." During the meeting a very bitter spirit was shown toward the white race. They passed resolutions declaring that the colored people were entitled to all the privileges and immunities enjoyed by the whites and pledged themselves never to rest until they had redressed their wrongs and gained their rights.⁴⁷

Another important instance of the opposition of the colored people of the North and West may be observed in the proceedings of a meeting held in Cincinnati. Mr. Vashon, a free man of color of Pittsburgh, had a motion passed in one of their anti-slavery meetings in that city, "declaring the Colonization Society inimical to the best interests of the free colored population of the country, and unworthy of the support of the churches." After speeches had been made by Vashon and Henry Gloster, a free man of color from Michigan, the original motion was passed with but one or two dissenting voices in spite of the efforts to amend it. It is probable that the amendments proposed were to soften the tone of the original motion, but no mention was made of them other than to state that they were offered by the opposition.⁴⁸

Numerous other meetings were held to continue the expression of the same sentiments. At a meeting in Boston in 1847 the Colonization Society was referred to as the expa-

⁴⁶ Having the idea that the colonization scheme meant the expatriation of the free Negroes, several of their eminent leaders and anti-slavery friends advocated the colonization of the colored people on the western public lands.

⁴⁷ *The African Repository*, XXII, 265.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, XXVI, 221.

triating institution which would never be able to expel "Americans by birth" pledged never to leave their native land.⁴⁹ A State convention of colored people of New York held during three days in the capital at Albany, 1851, unanimously expressed their pleasure at the failure of the Colonization Society of that State to obtain an appropriation from the Legislature.⁵⁰ At another meeting at Albany in 1852, Reverend J. W. C. Pennington and Dr. J. McCune Smith were instrumental in inducing the meeting to adopt an able refutation of Governor Hunt's views in favor of a similar appropriation.⁵¹ Another State Convention of Colored People of Ohio convened in Cincinnati, unconditionally condemned the Society because its policy of expatriating the free colored people was merely to render slave property more secure and valuable.⁵² John M. Langston was the chairman of this meeting. Other such meetings held in Rochester, New York, and New Bedford, Massachusetts, about the same time, expressed similar sentiments.⁵³ On the occasion of the formation of a County Colonization Society as a result of a visit of J. B. Pinney to Syracuse, resolutions expressing deep regret that the influence of the Society had extended to that section⁵⁴ were unanimously passed. At another meeting at Providence, the same year, the Colonization Society was denounced because of the plea that its motive in promoting emigration to Africa was to Christianize the heathen.⁵⁵

A series of meetings were held in Ohio to oppose the efforts of colonization agents.⁵⁶ A Columbus meeting of 1849 considered such workers inveterate enemies. Another meeting in the same place in 1851 referred to one of their

⁴⁹ Stebbins, "Facts and Opinions Touching the Real Origin and Influence of the American Colonization Society," 196.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 197.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 199.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 200.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 206.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 206.

memorials as containing the false statement that the colored people of Ohio were prepared to go to Liberia. They considered N. L. Rice and David Christy, promoters of the colonization scheme in that State, avowed friends of slavery and slaveholders.⁵⁷ In a subsequent State Convention in 1853, they urged every free black to use his influence against any bill offered in any State, or national legislature to appropriate money for this enterprise.⁵⁸ When "Cushing's Bill" to facilitate colonization was offered, the free people of Cincinnati, Ohio, held an indignation meeting in 1853 to organize their friends to prevent its passage.⁵⁹

The most distinguished Negroes of the country, too, were using the rostrum and the press to impede the progress of the American Colonization Society. Prominent among these protagonists were Samuel E. Cornish, and Theodore S. Wright, who without doubt voiced the sentiments of the majority of the free colored people in the North. These leaders took occasion in 1840 to attack Theodore Frelinghuysen and Benjamin Butler who had been reported as saying that the colonization project had been received with delight by the colored people.⁶⁰ Answering this assertion, they maintained that "if it was said of Southern slaves—if it had been asserted that they yearned for Africa or indeed, any part of the world, even more unhospitable and unhappy, where they might be free from their masters, there probably would have been no one to dissent from that opinion." But to prove that this was not the situation among the free people of color these spokesmen related numerous facts, showing that in various conventions from year to year the free blacks had protested against emigration to Africa.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Stebbins, "Facts and Opinions Touching the Real Origin, Character and Influence of the American Colonization Society," 207.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁶⁰ Cornish and Wright, "The Colonization Scheme Considered," 7.

⁶¹ "Having now done what we could," said they, "we ask you in view of the whole case whether you ought longer to take advantage of our weakness and press on us an enterprise that we have rejected from the first? Whether you ought to persist in a scheme which nourishes an unreasonable and un-

The greatest enemy of the Colonization Society among the freedmen, however, was yet to appear. This was Frederick Douglass. At the National Convention of Free People of Color, held at Rochester, New York, in 1853, he was called upon to write the address to the colored people of the United States. A significant expression in this address was: "We ask that no appropriation whatever, State or national, be granted to the colonization scheme. We would have our right to leave or remain in the United States placed above legislative interference."⁶² He had already gone on record in writing to Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe in reply to her inquiry as to the best thing to be done for the elevation of the colored people. "Evidently the Society," said he, "looks upon our extremity as their opportunity and whenever the elements are started against us they are stimulated to immeasurable activity. They do not deplore our misfortunes but rather rejoice in them."⁶³ He referred to the Society as the twin sister of slavery, still at her post fostering prejudice against the colored man and scattering abroad her hateful unphilosophical dogmas as to the inferiority of the Negro and the necessity of his expatriation for his elevation and that of his white country men. "The truth is," said he, "we are here and here we are likely to remain. Individuals emigrate, nations never. We have grown up with this republic and I see nothing in her character or find in the character of the American people as yet, which compels the belief that we must leave the United States."⁶⁴

All the free persons of color, however, did not continue to think on this wise. After the ebullitions of sentiment

christian prejudice—which persuades legislatures to continue their unjust enactments against us in all their rigor—which exposes us to the persecution of the proud and profligate—which cuts us off from employment, and straitens our means of subsistence—which afflicts us with the feeling that our condition is unstable—and prevents us from making efforts for our improvement, or for the advancement of our own usefulness and benefits and with our families."—Cornish and Wright, "The Colonization Scheme Considered," 8.

⁶² Stebbins, "Facts and Opinions Touching the Real Origin, Character and Influence of the American Colonization Society," 208.

⁶³ *The African Repository*, XXVI, 294.

⁶⁴ Douglass, "Life and Times of Frederick Douglass," 260.

had ceased, a few Negroes began to think that emigration was not an unmixed evil. They were driven to this position in various ways. Some desired to flee from increasing persecution then afflicting free Negroes both in the North and in the South; others were won over by such inducements for commercial advancement as a pacification of Yoruba seemed to offer in opening up the Soudan; and not a few like Alexander Crummell⁶⁵ and Daniel A. Payne, who, although opposed to the expatriation of their race, favored colonization so far as it would redeem Africa. Even Frederick Douglass, in answering the charge that the free people of color had been prejudiced against efforts to redeem Africa, stated that they were very much in favor of such a work, but objected to the efforts of the Colonization Society because of its "defect of good motives."⁶⁶ A number of Negroes yielded also to the logic of the Colonizationists, who in trying to disabuse their minds of the thought that it would be a disgrace to leave this country as exiles, held up to them the example of the Pilgrim Fathers who left their native land to obtain political and religious liberty. Furthermore, some Negroes like Martin R. Delaney, who had at first fearlessly opposed the colonization of the blacks in Africa, began during the fifties to promote the emigration of the free people of color to other parts. Many of this persuasion went to Canada West and some few to Trinidad.⁶⁷

Although antagonism to African Colonization was pronounced in the Northern free States, there were several intelligent colored men who were strongly in favor of it. It was said, however, that such Negroes had usually been educated or aided in some way by the American Colonization Society. One of this class of spokesmen was George Baltimore, of Whitehall. In reading in the *National Watchman* a notice for a call for a national convention of colored people to be held in Troy, in 1847, he availed himself of the

⁶⁵ Crummell thought so well of it that he went to Africa for this purpose. See *The African Repository*, XXX, 125.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, LXIII, 273.

⁶⁷ Niles' Register, LVI, 165 and 180.

opportunity to speak for the Colonization Society. Referring to the suggestions set forth in the call, the writer said that he could adopt all of them excepting the one to recommend emigration and colonization not of Africa, Asia, or Europe. He considered this a fling at the American Colonization Society, and those people of color who were desirous of going to their fatherland.⁶⁸ Another spokesman of this order was Alphonso M. Sumner, of Philadelphia. Personally he was in favor of emigrating from the United States and was of the opinion that, at that time at least, colonization in Liberia offered the only tangible means of attaining their wishes. He believed that the abolition of the slave trade could be attained in no other way, but like most colored men in the free States, favoring colonization, he was desirous of knowing something about the land before emigrating thereto.⁶⁹

Writing from Hartford in 1851, Augustus Washington stated that he was well aware that there could be nothing more startling than that a Northern colored man, considered intelligent and sound in faith, should declare his opinion and use his influence in favor of African colonization. He maintained, however, that the novelty of the thing did not prove it false any more than it would be to say that because one breaks away from a long-established custom he may not have the least reason for doing so. He urged the free colored people to emigrate from the crowded cities to less populous parts of the United States, to the Great West or to Africa, or to any place where they might secure an equality of rights and liberties with a mind unfettered and space in which to rise. Moreover, from the time he was a lad of fifteen years of age, and especially since the Mexican War, he had advocated the plan of a separate State for the colored people.⁷⁰ In a letter addressed to the editor of the *African*

⁶⁸ *The African Repository*, XXIII, 374.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, XXIV, 243.

⁷⁰ Mr. Washington had been active in securing the assistance of a few men of superior ability and high ideals and finally entered into negotiations with the authorities for a tract of land in Mexico on which he proposed to colonize

Repository, in 1853, Nathaniel Bowen undertook to express similar views. Although they possessed only partial freedom in this country, the free colored people of his city, Rome, New York, were generally against colonization. Moreover, he found many colored people who talked of and favored going to Canada, but he believed if those persons would take their interests into consideration, they would not hesitate to go to Africa.⁷¹

The efforts toward emigration too took organized form during the forties and fifties. In 1848 the free colored people of Dayton, Ohio, held a meeting to express their sentiments in favor of emigration to Africa, and to ask the white citizens to aid them in going there.⁷² The movement also reached the colored people of Cincinnati, Ohio.⁷³ At a meeting held in that city on the 14th of July, 1850, they adopted a preamble and resolutions expressing similar sentiments. Going a step further, in 1850 a number of free Negroes of New York formed an organization called the New York and Liberian Agricultural and Emigration Society to cooperate with the Colonization Society. Considerable money was collected by the organization to aid emigrants whom they sent to Liberia.⁷⁴

In July, 1852, there was held in Baltimore, a meeting of delegates from the city and different sections of the State of Maryland. After heated discussion and much excitement they passed resolutions to examine the different foreign localities for emigration, giving preference to Liberia. It seemed that although a majority of the delegates present

the free Negroes of the United States, but the war in that country prevented the execution of the plan. He was compelled finally to abandon the plan of a separate state in America, but gave all his time, voice and pen and means to the cause of emigration to Liberia. See *New York Tribune*, —, and *The African Repository*, XXVII, 259.

⁷¹ Anthony Bowen, who was at that time a messenger in the Patent Office at Washington, D. C., was the uncle of Nathaniel Bowen. See *The African Repository*, XXVIII, 164.

⁷² *The African Repository*, XXI, 285.

⁷³ *The Cincinnati Gazette*, July 14, 1841.

⁷⁴ Stebbins, "Facts and Opinions Touching the Real Origin, Character and Influence of the American Colonization Society," 200-201.

desired to coöperate with the American Colonization Society, they were afraid to do so because of the opposition of the Baltimore people, who in a state of excitement almost developed into a mob intent upon breaking up the meeting.⁷⁵ As this meeting of delegates from the whole State seemed to be favorable to the colonization enterprise, the people of Baltimore felt it incumbent upon them to hold another meeting a few days thereafter, maintaining that they did not know that a previous meeting was called for the consideration of the questions brought before it, and denounced it as being unrepresentative. They said that they were not opposed to voluntary emigration but did not at any time elect delegates to the so-called Colored Colonization Convention.⁷⁶

To carry out more effectively the work of ameliorating the condition of the colored people, a National Council composed of two members chosen by election at a poll in each State, was organized in 1853. As many as twenty State conventions were to be represented. Before these plans could be well matured, however, those who believed that emigration was the only solution of the race problem called another convention to consider merely that question. Only those who would not introduce the question of African emigration but favored colonization in some other parts were invited. Among the persons thus interested were Reverend William Webb and Martin R. Delaney of Pittsburgh, Doctor J. Gould Bias and Franklin Turner of Philadelphia, Reverend Augustus R. Greene of Allegheny, Pennsylvania, James M. Whitfield of New York, William Lambert of Michigan, Henry Bibb, James Theodore Holly of Canada, and Henry M. Collins of California.⁷⁷ Frederick Douglass criticised this step as uncalled for, unwise, unfortunate, and premature. "A convention to consider the subject of emigration," said he, "when every delegate must declare himself in favor of it before hand, as a condition of taking

⁷⁵ *The Baltimore Sun*, July 27, 28 and 29, 1852.

⁷⁶ Stebbins, "Facts and Opinions, etc.," 200-201.

⁷⁷ Cromwell, "The Negro in American History," 42.

his seat, is like the handle of the jug, all on one side.”⁷⁸ James M. Whitfield, the Negro poet of America, came to the defense of his co-workers, he and Douglass continuing the literary duel for a number of weeks. The convention was accordingly held. In it there appeared three parties, one led by Doctor Delaney who desired to go to the Niger Valley in Africa, another by Whitfield, whose interests seemed to be in Central America, and a third by Holly who showed a preference for Haiti. The leaders of these respective parties were commissioned to go to these various countries to do what they could in carrying out their schemes.⁷⁹ Holly went to Haiti and took up with the Minister of the Interior the question of admitting Negro emigrants from the United States.⁸⁰

Among the colored people of the Northwest there appeared evidence of considerable interest in emigration. This was especially true of Illinois and Indiana, from which commissioners had been sent out to spy the land.⁸¹ This is evidenced too by the sentiment expressed by delegates attending the Cleveland Convention in 1854. The next emigration convention was held at Chatham, Canada West, in 1856. One of the important features of this meeting was the hearing the report of Holly who went to Haiti the previous year. From this same meeting Martin R. Delaney proceeded on his mission to the Niger Valley in Africa. There he concluded a treaty with eight African kings, offering inducements to Negroes to emigrate. In the meantime James Redpath had gone to Haiti and accomplished some things that Holly failed to achieve. He was appointed Haitian Commissioner of Emigration in the United States, with Holly as his co-worker. They succeeded in sending to Haiti as many as two thousand emigrants, the first sailing

⁷⁸ *The North Star*, 1853.

⁷⁹ Letter of Bishop Holly in Cromwell's "Negro in American History," 43-44.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁸¹ *The African Repository*, XXIV, 261.

in 1861. Owing to their unpreparedness and the unfavorable climate, not more than one third of them remained.⁸²

Considering the facts herein set forth we are compelled to say that the colonization movement was a failure. Although it did finally interest a number of free Negroes their concern in it did not materialize on account of the outbreak of the Civil War occurring soon thereafter. On the whole, the movement never appealed to a large number of intelligent free people of color. With the exception of those who hoped to be especially benefited thereby, few leading Negroes dared to support the enterprise. The most weighty evidence we can offer is statistics themselves. The report of the Colonization Society shows that from 1820 to 1833⁸³ only 2,885 colored persons had been sent out by the Society. More than 2,700 of this number were taken from the slave States, and about two thirds of these were slaves manumitted on the condition of their emigrating. Of the 7,836⁸⁴ sent out of the United States up to 1852, 2,720 were born free, 204 purchased their freedom, 3,868 were emancipated in view of removing them to Liberia, and 1,044 were liberated Africans sent out by the United States Government. When we consider the fact that there were 434,495⁸⁵ free persons of color in the United States in 1850 and 488,070 in 1860, this element of the population had not been materially decreased by the efforts of the American Colonization Society.

LOUIS R. MEHLINGER

⁸² Letter of Bishop Holly in Cromwell's "The Negro in American History," 44.

⁸³ *The Liberator*, 1833.

⁸⁴ *The African Repository*, XXIII, 117.

⁸⁵ United States Census, 1850 and 1860.